

BOOK REVIEWS

The Eco-Certified Child: Citizenship and education for sustainability and environment

Malin Ideland, (2019). *The Eco-Certified Child: Citizenship and education for sustainability and environment*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Reviewed by Paul H. Mason, *Taronga Conservation Society Australia*, New South Wales, Australia

The Eco-Certified Child is part of the Palgrave Studies in Education and the Environment series edited by Alan Reid and Marcia McKenzie, which showcases and promotes current theoretical developments in critical interdisciplinary scholarship on education and environment. An essential and challenging inclusion in this series, *The Eco-Certified Child* problematises rarely disputed beliefs in the values and good intentions of environmental and sustainability education. Malin Ideland uses ethnological theory and methods to investigate how environmental and sustainability education can perpetuate harmful norms that serve to further entrench patterns of inclusion and exclusion in categories of citizenship. Ideland recognises that environmental problems are real and need to be urgently addressed. Working towards sustainable and environmentally friendly cultural practices, she argues, requires a nuanced understanding of what can unintentionally piggyback upon the good intentions to educate for a sustainable future. Without critical analysis, the best efforts can be undermined by unquestioned injustices and inequalities. By constructing the discursive figuration of ecological citizenship, Ideland deftly deconstructs how environmentally friendly understandings of how to be and act to organise our social, economic and political lives.

As an anthropologist working in conservation, I was particularly receptive to how Ideland skillfully put her own work and experiences in dialogue with the work of social theorists, including Sara Ahmed, Benedict Anderson, Hannah Arendt, Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, Ian Hacking, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Nikolas Rose, Edward Said and Max Weber. Through a variety of conceptual lenses, Ideland unpacks the environmental discourses compelling certain forms of action in the world, the politics of evidence driving environmentally friendly initiatives, the technology of statistics in ethical decision making, the performative magic of numbers in cultivating citizens-in-the-making, the domestication of emotions in elevating appropriate responses and sensibilities towards nature, the rituals and taboos of sustainability practices, the unintended consequences of hegemonic truths as they are rolled out in population-wide normative behaviours, the patterning of superiority and subordination in social orientations towards the rest of nature, who is heard and who is silenced in environmental agenda setting, the relationship between individuality and collective belonging in co-constructing personhood and nationhood under the sustainability banner, and the hidden coloniality of the sustainability project. What a juicy selection of topics to cover in just one book! Of course, that is not to forget the education theorists Ideland draws upon as well, most notably Thomas Popkewitz.

Malin Ideland shares hard-won insights that will benefit educators working in environmental and sustainability education. Thoughtful engagement with her book will help to transform nature education and conservation initiatives into more than just an investment in self-image and into a sincere and deep investment in a truly sustainable future. By asking what kinds of people are being made through environmental and sustainability education practices, Ideland challenges her readers to reconsider established curricula and pedagogies with a deep consideration of the broader social, economic and political commitments of schooling. A critical reappraisal, Ideland finds, is in order. Ideland's analysis is elegant, piercing, and hopefully destabilising to dominant discourses in

current environmental and sustainability education programs. By rendering visible how numerical technologies of scientific rationalism and logic depoliticise the political by making it appear objective, Ideland demonstrates how the aesthetics of environmentally friendly practices promoted by corporations and governments need serious and urgent critique. Problematising the seemingly incontestable is no easy task, but Ideland's careful intervention successfully invites readers to reassess redemptive discourses permeating environmental and sustainability education.

The Eco-Certified Child is a short book, but not a fast read. I savoured chapters for a week at a time, reflecting upon the political ecology of sustainability messaging, reconceptualising familiar notions of nature education, and reformulating my own classes on conservation science, education and leadership. Malin Ideland, as well as Alan Crozier, who translated sections of the original book from Swedish into English, should be congratulated for communicating challenging academic material with such clarity. The English expression is seamless, which is no mean feat for a tome of such complexity and nuance. I was able to find new insights each time I returned to read passages again, and enjoyed many long pauses as I deliberated upon the content. My assessment, biased by my training as a cultural anthropologist, is that *The Eco-Certified Child* is a signature text and a must-read for those teachers teaching the teachers.

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Educational reform and environmental concern — A history of school nature study in Australia

Dorothy Kass, Routledge 2018.

Reviewed by Malcolm Skilbeck, Emeritus Professor, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia

At the beginning of the 20th century, 'new' or 'progressive' educational ideas were beginning to challenge Australia's educational leaders to engage school students as active rather than passive learners — to move away from the then dominant rote-learning pattern of schooling. Dorothy Kass, in her book *Educational Reform and Environmental Concern*, argues that a key vehicle through which progressive ideas first came into Australian schools was in the emerging subject of nature study — first incorporated into new syllabi in Victoria in 1902, and in New South Wales in 1904. By the end of the 19th century, against a backdrop of industrialisation, urbanisation and land clearance, concern for conservation was growing within Australian society, fed by a deep feeling for the natural world integral to the Romantic legacy. Educators saw the primary school as an appropriate vehicle of this concern.

The nature study idea and its expression in the work of schooling was, Kass argues, a key element in a wider process of educational reform that gathered strength across the Western world at the end of the 19th and in the early decades of the 20th century. Kass writes: 'Nature study enjoyed a distinctive definition and wide scope, including scientific observation and reasoning, aesthetic appreciation and development of close understanding of and sympathy for the natural world.' What reformers were pursuing was schooling that fostered children's active, self-directed learning, immediate and imaginative engagement with the material world, greater use of all the senses, and experiential learning. Children were to be encouraged to cultivate and refine their